

and we never want to change by Iris Violetta

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Summary: They say you lay down flowers at a funeral but what do you do for a man whose idea of beauty was a double whiskey and a cigarette? (a drabble)

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They say you lay down flowers at a funeral but what do you do for a man whose idea of beauty was a double whiskey and a cigarette?

El's learned more than she ever wanted about funerals the past week. Joyce is preoccupied with taking care of El, so Flo ends up doing the planning. She tells El about the proper flowers to order, the traditional black attire and the eulogies. All things El didn't know. Didn't *want* to know.

What she does know is that she feels numb most of the time. That she sleeps in his old shirts that still smell like his cigarettes (Joyce likes a different brand and El can't help but notice the difference.) That being in Mike's arms helps, but it doesn't fix anything. That sometimes she hates Will because his mom came back and her dad didn't (and then she hates herself for thinking that and the spiral continues). That she's too afraid to start counting the days because she knows she'll be counting forever.

That right now she's sitting on a white chair between Will and Mike in the cemetery, and that clutching the seat until the rough plastic edge cuts into her fingers is the only thing keeping her here. She concentrates on that pain, because concentrating on everything else is worse. She wishes she could float away.

Dr. Owens paid for a coffin, but El knows that besides a few personal items, it's empty. Joyce said there was nothing left of him; he turned to dust. *Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.* She was dust once too, but apparently it's not the same.

(She placed Sara's hairband in there for a moment earlier, but quickly changed her mind and snatched it back.)

Several people attend. She didn't even know he knew that many people. She recognizes her friends' families, the other cops, Murray, Mr. Clarke sitting next to an English teacher holding coffee. But there are many strangers. They come up one by one to speak.

Most of their words float by her, but El realizes how long some of

these people had known him, how many years of memories. She didn't even have two.

It's not fair.

She's pulling at the hairband on her wrist, tugging it round and round until Mike gently places his hand on top to still her. She didn't even realize she was doing it. Nothing is clear anymore.

Soon she'll have to get up. She'll have to sit inside and pick at food she's not hungry for. She'll have to accept condolences from people she's never met. And then she'll have to go home. Wherever that is now.

And as awful as she feels sitting here, sitting here at his funeral, at *Hop's* funeral, she doesn't want it to end. Because then she'll have to keep on living.

And he'll still be dead.